

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7831

S E C R E T CAIRO 11393

NODIS

FOR UNDERSECRETARY SISCO FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR US IS EG

SUBJECT: "SEABIRD" TRANSIT THROUGH SUEZ CANAL

REF: STATE 264198

1. I NOTE FROM REFTEL THAT, IN TELLING DINITZ ABOUT FAHMY'S REACTION TO THE PROPOSED "SEABIRD" RETURN TRANSIT, YOU DID SO IN GENERAL TERMS RATHER THAN MENTIONING THE ONE MONTH PERIOD FAHMY INDICATED TO US. I AM SURE YOU HAD GOOD REASON FOR DOING SO, BUT AM A BIT CONCERNED ABOUT THE ISRAELI REACTION WHICH SEEMS TO SUGGEST THAT THEY INTEND TO HAVE "SEABIRD" MAKE SOUTHBOUND TRANSIT ASAP WITH ITS CARGO OF PIPES.

2. LIKE YOU, I THINK SUCH ISRAELI CARGO TRANSITS SHOULD BE ROUTINIZED AS SOON AS FEASIBLE AND THAT WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO URGE THIS ON EGYPTIANS. HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF FAHMY'S INSISTENCE ON ONE MONTH DELAY BEFORE RETURN TRANSIT, I.E. A TIME WHEN THE ISRAELIS WILL HAVE FULLY RETURNED THE OIL FIELDS AND WITHDRAWN THEIR MILITARY FROM THEM. I AM JUST A BIT CONCERNED THAT THE ISRAELIS APPARENTLY CONTEMPLATE FORCING THIS ISSUE IN A MANNER WHICH COULD PROVOKE THE EGYPTIANS

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TO STOP THE TRANSIT. LATTER IS STRONG POSSIBILITY,

ESPECIALLY AFTER (A) EXTENSIVE ISRAELI PUBLICITY GIVEN TO REAL AND ALLEGED TRANSITS, ALL OF WHICH EMBARRASS SADAT BEFORE ARAB WBOLD, AND (B) IN DIS- REGARD OF FAHMY'S SPECIFIC TIME PERIOD FOR RETURN TRANSIT. SHOULD ISRAELIS DO SO, FAHMY WILL ALSO QUESTION OUR ROLE IN THIS. I CANNOT, OF COURSE, BE SURE THAT THE EGYPTIANS WILL STOP THE VESSEL'S SOUTHERN TRANSIT IF SHE ATTEMPTS IT IN THE NEXT WEEK OR SO, BUT THIS LIKELIHOOD CANNOT BE DISCOUNTED.

3. I WONDER IF WE SHOULD NOT TAKE THIS MATTER UP AGAIN WITH JERUSALEM TO INDICATE (A) WE SHARE ISRAELI VIEW WE SHOULD WORK TO MAKE SUCH TRANSITS ROUTINE AFFAIRS WITHOUT ADVANCE NOTIFICATION, (B) IN OUR VIEW, WITH THE DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT STILL IN ITS EARLY STAGES OF IMPLEMENTATION, IT MAY BE A BIT PREMATURE TO ATTEMPT TO DO SO RIGHT NOW, (C) TO AVOID POSSIBLE EMBARRASSMENT TO ALL PARTIES, ISRAELIS SHOULD CONSIDER DEFERRING "SEABIRD'S" RETURN TRANSIT BY THREE WEEKS OR SO, AND (D) THEREAFTER WE WILL INFORM GOE THAT WE SEE NO NEED TO NOTIFY IT IN CASE OF ANY FUTURE TRANSITS AND THAT WE ASSUME SUCH TRANSITS WILL HENCEFORTH BE TREATED AS ROUTINE AFFAIRS.

4. DEPT MAY WISH PASS THIS MESSAGE TO TEL AVIV.
EILTS

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NNN

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